

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 153374

EXDIS FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT BRASILIA 4702, ACTION SECSTATE 14 JUNE:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 4703

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS SHUM BR

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE USG ACTION IN SUPPORT OF BRAZILIAN HUMAN RIGHTS
COALITION

REF: STATE 146244

SUMMARY: THE BRAZILIAN POLITICAL SITUATION IS CURRENTLY VERY FLUID
BUT GENERALLY MOVING IN DIRECTION CONSISTENT WITH US GOALS AND
OBJECTIVES. WE BELIEVE THE BEST POSTURE FOR THE USG AT THIS TIME
IS TO FOLLOW THE PRECEDENT SET BY PRESIDENT CARTER DURING HIS MARCH
VISIT, I.E., THAT OF BEING AN INTERESTED OBSERVER WITH RESPECT FOR
NON-INTERFERENCE IN BRAZIL'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. END SUMMARY.

1. AS EMBASSY REPORTING HAS INDICATED, THE PACE OF POLITICAL DEVEL-
OPMENTS IN BRAZIL HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY RAPID. IT RECEIVED STRONG
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IMPETUS FROM THE WIDESPREAD ADVERSE REACTION TO THE MANNER IN WHICH
ARENA'S CANDIDATES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 1 INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL ELEC-
TIONS WERE DESIGNATED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE IN APRIL. AS ALSO
REPORTED, THE SITUATION DEVELOPED EVEN GREATER MOMENTUM FOLLOWING
THE JUNE 4 DEFEAT IN THE SAO PAULO STATE CONVENTION OF THE GUBERNA-
TORIAL CANDIDATE THAT HAD BEEN HAND-PICKED BY GENERAL FIGUEIREDO.
THE SAO PAULO DEFEAT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S AND FIGUEIREDO'S

REACTION THERETO (ONE OF OSTENSIBLE ACCEPTANCE), OPENED A RANGE OF ELECTORAL POSSIBILITIES, PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED FORECLOSED, FOR OTHER ARENA DISSIDENTS AND THE OPPOSITION MDB. IT ALSO PROVIDED ENCOURAGEMENT TO ONGOING EFFORTS TO GIVE ORGANIZATIONAL SUBSTANCE TO THE STILL EMBRYONIC "FRONT FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION", IN WHICH ITS PROMOTERS HOPE TO BRING TOGETHER THE VARIED CIVILIAN AND SO FAR SCATTERED MILITARY ELEMENTS SEEKING TO PRESSURE GEISEL INTO A BROADER AND MORE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL OPENING THAN HE MAN HAVE INTENDED.

2. THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE GENERATED A GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY WHICH HAS SO FAR BEEN MARKED BY CAUTION ON ALL SIDES. RESPONSIBLE SPOKESMEN FOR CIVILIAN GROUPS, PARTICULARLY INCLUDING THE MDB'S TOP LEADERSHIP, HAVE BEEN MOST CAREFUL IN THEIR RESPONSES TO THE SITUATION. THE GOVERNMENT, VIA SENATOR PORTELLA, THE PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SPOKESMAN AND OTHERS, HAS BEEN A MODEL OF MODERATION. TOP MILITARY FIGURES, INCLUDING "DISSIDENTS" LIKE GENERAL HUGO ABREU AND RETIRED GENERAL EULER BENTES, HAVE REMAINED CORRECT IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON HIGHLY CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.

3. ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE ACTING OUT A DYNAMIC THAT IS ENTIRELY BRAZILIAN--THAT OF INTERACTION BETWEEN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ELITES IN WHAT ARE BELIEVED TO BE THE BEST INTERSTS OF THE COUNTRY. THIS HAS BEEN TRADITIONAL IN BRAZIL THROUGHOUT ITS 156 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, AND PARTICULARLY SO DURING THIS CENTURY. IT WAS THIS SAME INTERACTION THAT RESULTED IN THE PEACEFUL OVERTHROW OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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VARGAS DICTATORSHIP IN 1945, IN ASSURING THE PEACEFUL SUCCESSION TO THE PRESIDENCY OF JOAO GOULART IN 1961, AND IN HIS SUBSEQUENT PEACEFUL OVERTHROW IN 1964. IN THESE AND OTHER INSTANCES THE MILITARY,

USUALLY AFTER CONSIDERABLE CIVILIAN PERSUASION, BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH WIDESPREAD CIVILIAN SENTIMENT THAT HAD BEEN COALESCING OVER A PERIOD OF TIME. WITHOUT BEING OVERLY OPTIMISTIC, SOME VETERAN OBSERVERS OF THE LOCL SCENE BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING SIMILAR IS OCCURRING NOW. THERE IS NO QUESTION IN MANY MINDS (INCLUDING OURS),

THAT THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AS A WHILE--PERHAPS WITH IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS--IS WELL AWARE OF AND TO VARYING DEGREES SHARES WHAT IS TERMED THE GENERAL CVILIAN "FATIGUE" WITH THE STATE OF AFFAIRS THAT HAS PREVAILED SINCE 1964. FURTHER, THE MILITARY THEMSELVES HAVE BECOME SURFEITED WITH THEIR UNPRECEDENTED AND ESSENTIALLY STILL UNFAMILIAR ROLE IN THE POLITICAL DIRECTION OF THE NATION. AGAIN WITH SOME POSSIBLY IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS, THEY ARE TIRED OF BEING IN POWER AND OF BEING BLAMED FOR WHATEVER GOES WRONG, ANXIOUS TO RETURN TO THEIR PROFESSIONAL PURSUITS AND TO THEIR TRADITIONAL ROLE AS MODERATORS

(I.E., MONITORS) OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE ALSO

CONCERNED THAT THE PROCESS OF THEIR EXTRICATION NOT BE DISRUPTIVE OF THE POLITICAL STABILITY OR THE ECONOMIC PROGRESS THEY HAVE ACHIEVED. THIS CONCERN IS IN TURN SHARED BY THE BULK OF MODERATE CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP--AGAIN, INCLUDING THAT OF THE MDB.

4. WHAT SEEMS NOW UNDERWAY IS THE BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS OF EXTRICATION. NO ONE CAN YET KNOW WHETHER THE PROCESS IS IRREVERSIBLE. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT IT HAS BEGUN, THAT IT IS MOST PROBABLY PROCEEDING AT A PACE SOMEWHAT FASTER THAN ANTICIPATED BY GEISEL, AND THAT IT HAS ENGAGED THE FULL ATTENTION OF THE ENTIRE NATION, INCLUDING THE MILITARY.

5. THE PROCESS IS A VERY DELICATE ONE. BOTH CIVILIANS AND MILITARY ARE FEELING THEIR WAY--TRYING NOT TO BE PROVOCATIVE ONE OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER, NOT TO TAKE A FALSE STEP, NOT TO RESPOND IRRATIONALLY TO ACTIONS BY ONE OR THE OTHER; IN SUM, NOT TO CAUSE, UNWITTINGLY OR OTHERWISE, A RETROGRESSION. TOP SPOKESMEN FOR THE GOB (INCLUDING GEISEL AND FIGUEIREDO) AND THE OPPOSITON (INCLUDING MDB) HAVE PUBLICLY VOICED THIS LATTER CONCERN.

6. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, WE BELIEVE THAT OUR BEST POSTURE TOWARD BRAZIL'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION IS TO REMAIN INTERESTED AND, IF AND WHEN APPROACHED, COOPERATIVE OBSERVERS. THIS IS THE POSTURE THAT WON PRESIDENT CARTER SO MANY POINTS FROM ALL SIDES DURING HIS VISIT LAST MARCH--FOR CONDUCTING HIMSELF WITH DUE RESPECT FOR THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND SOVEREIGNTY OF BRAZIL. WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN THIS MANNER, AND ESPECIALLY IN THOSE AREAS IN WHICH CONFRONTATION OCCURRED LAST YEAR: NUCLEAR ENERGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS. THE JUST CONCLUDED AND VERY SUCCESSFUL VISIT OF AMBASSADOR GERARD SMITH IS AN EXCELLENT ILLUSTRATION. HIS CAREFUL REGARD FOR EXTREME BRAZILIAN SENSITIVITY ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE PERMITTED HIS VISIT TO BE BOTH CONSTRUCTIVE AND PRODUCTIVE ON AN ISSUE AROUND WHICH ALL BRAZILIANS HAVE RALLIED WHEN BRAZIL'S POSITION HAS APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN "CHALLENGED" BY THE UNITED STATES. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MDB AND OTHER CIVILIAN GROUPS HAVE BEEN APPRECIATIVE OF THE OVERARCHING SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CAUSES IN BRAZIL THAT HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY THE NOW PERVASIVE AWARENESS THROUGHOUT BRAZILIAN SOCIETY OF OUR GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY (EVIDENCED, FOR EXAMPLE, BY THE MDB'S STRONG WORDS OF PRAISE FOR THIS POLICY DURING THE JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS IN HONOR OF PRESIDENT CARTER), BUT THEY HAVE NEITHER ASKED FOR OUR DIRECT SUPPORT OF BRAZILIAN INITIATIVES NOR INDICATED INTEREST IN SEEKING TO INVOLVE US IN THE VERY BRAZILIAN PROCESS NOW UNDERWAY. THE MDB WAS VERY AWAREFUL, FOR INSTANCE, TO AVOID ANY APPEARANCE OF SOLICITING A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER OUT OF CONCERN THAT IT BE INTERPRETED AS SEEKING HIS DIRECT SUPPORT FOR THE SOLUTION OF INTERNAL BRAZILIAN PROBLEMS. EFFORTS BY BRAZILIAN STUDENTS TO
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ELICIT US SUPPORT FOR THEIR CAUSE WERE SHARPLY AND PUBLICLY
ATTACKED ON JUST THESE GROUNDS, AND THE STRONGEST CRITICS WERE
OTHER STUDENTS.

7. THE SHORT ANSWER TO REFTEL IS, THEN, THAT WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE
SHOULD BE TAKING ADDITIONAL STEPS TO SEEK TO ACCELERATE A PROCESS
IN WHICH EVEN THOSE DIRECTLY INVOLVED HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE
EXPERIENCE AND ARE FEELING THEIR WAY. WITH REGARD TO ONE VETERAN
OBSERVER'S RECOMMENDATION AS TO A DESIRABLE US POSTURE, SEE
BRZILIA 4622, WHICH REPORTS A RECENT DISCUSSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
BETWEEN THE AMBASSADOR AND THE PAPAL NUNCIO. SAYRE UNQUOTE
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